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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1561  
INFO RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0181  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHFR/USMISSION UNESCO PARIS 0003  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1137

UNCLAS PRETORIA 000636

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FOR IO/UNESCO/CNOVO, IO/PPC/RWILBUR, EB/TPP/MTA/LCHASON

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [SCUL](#) [UNESCO](#) [SF](#)  
SUBJECT: UNESCO CONVENTION ON CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS UPDATE  
AND INFORMATION REQUEST

REF: STATE 19851

11. (SBU) We understand from Director Rufus Mathebe of the Department of Arts and Culture and State Law Advisor Joann Schneeberger of the Department of Foreign Affairs that the Convention on Cultural Diversity must be approved by Cabinet before taken up by Parliament for ratification. Mathabe expects that Cabinet will approve the Convention within the next two to three months. Schneeberger told us that it normally takes six to twelve months for Parliament to ratify.

12. (SBU) To date, there has been little or no media coverage of the Convention, and no discernible public debate. However, over the course of the last two years, at least four governmental departments (Foreign Affairs, Environment and Tourism, Justice, and Arts and Culture) have issued press releases expounding the importance of South Africa's leadership in drafting the Convention. If push came to shove, we believe that there are any number of local NGO's that would strongly support ratification, as would political parties. We have little doubt that South Africa will ratify the Convention.

13. (SBU) We note that former Minister of Education and current Member of Parliament Kader Asmal chaired the Convention's negotiating sessions of intergovernmental experts. Arts and Culture Minister Pallo Jordan attended the 33rd UNESCO General Conference in Paris on October 17-20, 2005 to read the declaration on behalf of African member states. The Department of Arts and Culture plans to hold a Regional and Diaspora Conference on Cultural Diversity in March or April of 2006, where it will press other African countries to ratify the Convention. On February 9, French Ambassador to South Africa Jean Felix-Paganon presented the Insignia of Officer of the Order of the Legion of Honor, one of France's highest awards, to Asmal in recognition of 1) his struggle against apartheid, 2) his pursuit of human rights, and 3) his work with the United Nations on protecting cultural expression.  
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